CIA Prober Hits Pressure To Go Easy

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The Senate intelligence committee has been running into mounting pressures from the administration to suppress the results of its investigations, Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) charged yesterday.

Central Intelligence Agency Director William E. Colby urged the committee at a closed meeting yesterday morning not to hold any public hearings on covert CIA operations in Chile.

Church also told reporters at a mid-day briefing that the administration still opposes open hearings on improper activities of the National Security Agency and that the White House recently objected to release of even a printed report on the CIA's involvement in foreign assassination plots.

"The pressures are mounting on a broadening front," Church said.

But in spite of the complaints, he added, the committee will go ahead today with a public hearing on the supersecret NSA. Church said the Senate panel also has no intention of abandoning its plans to publish a comprehensive report on its months-long assassination inquiry.

The Idaho Democrat said he saw no reason to keep the Chile inquiry secret either, but the committee will first attempt to find out "how strongly the administration is prepared to resist" a public airing.

Colby and William Nelson, the CIA's deputy director of covert operations, testified in closed session yesterday about the spy agency's work in Chile from 1964, when it spent some $3 million to oppose the presidential candidacy of Marxist Salvador Allende, until 1973, when Allende was overthrown in a military coup.

Two former ambassadors to Chile, Ralph Dungan, who served from 1964 to 1967, and Nathaniel Davis, from 1971 to 1973, appeared before the committee yesterday afternoon. George Kennan, former ambassador to Moscow and author of the so-called "containment policy," also testified about the value of covert operations generally.

Church said he felt disclosure "of the whole story (on Chile) is in the best interests of everyone", since it would give the CIA a chance to explain itself publicly. He said the episodes were all past history and would "not entail any threat to national security."

But he said no decision was reached because "it was not clear if Mr. Colby and others would be prohibited from testifying" in public.

Turning to the committee's nearly complete assassination report, Church recalled how President Ford himself had encouraged a congressional investigation of CIA-sponsored plots after the Rockefeller commission had been unable to complete its own inquiry.

"I can't imagine how now it could even be suggested that this report not be made public," Church said.

He said the objection had been voiced in a letter to the committee from White House counsel Phillp Buchen.

The Oct. 9 note, made public later in the day, appeared to be largely a complaint for the record. In it, Buchen said the "general view of the executive branch is that any report on political assassination allegations issued by the select committee as an official government document may seriously prejudice our national security through damage to the foreign relations of the U.S. and to the position of the U.S. in the world community."

Buchen added, however, that the White House realized the committee "intends to exercise its own judgment" and therefore would assign three officials, from the State Department, CIA and Pentagon, to read over the draft report for any language that might cause "specific security problems."